



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Virginia Child Care Subsidy Program Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19

Updated March 31, 2020

(This information will be updated as additional information becomes available.)

Child Care Subsidy Program FAQs - Families:

1. How can essential personnel in need of child care apply for the Child Care Subsidy Program?

Essential personnel can apply for Child Care Subsidy in two ways, which include [CommonHelp](http://www.commonhelp.virginia.gov/), (<http://www.commonhelp.virginia.gov/>) a web-based app that allows Virginians to screen for eligibility, apply for benefits and services, and obtain other information; or by submitting an application directly to their local department of social services. A listing of all local departments is available from the Virginia Department of Social Services website (www.dss.virginia.gov) under “Find your local department” on the home page.

2. How will local departments of social services maintain contact with families should offices “close?”

In most instances, if a local department is closed to the public, staff remain working either remotely or on site. Families are also encouraged to apply for assistance through [CommonHelp](http://www.commonhelp.virginia.gov/).

3. Has eligibility criteria for the Subsidy Program changed?

No, eligibility criteria remain in place. This information is available on the child care microsite (www.childcareva.com) or [CommonHelp](http://www.commonhelp.virginia.gov/).

4. Do I need to participate in a face-to-face interview to apply for Child Care Subsidy services?

No. The requirement for a face-to-face interview as part of the eligibility determination process for the Child Care Subsidy Program has been temporarily waived.

5. My school-age child participates in the Child Care Subsidy Program and is approved for only part-day care. While schools are closed, can my child be approved for full-day care?

Yes, local departments can authorize a full day of child care for the time public school is not available to children. Parents should communicate their need to their case worker in the local department of social services, who will process the appropriate authorization.

6. Can siblings of children currently receiving Child Care Subsidy services be authorized during the period of school closure?

Yes, children that are eligible for Child Care Subsidy but do not have a current authorization, may receive services during school closure, if needed. This does not apply to children that are currently on the waitlist.

7. How can I find another child care provider if my provider closes?

When a Child Care Subsidy vendor closes, families participating in the Child Care Subsidy Program should seek assistance from their case worker at the local department of social services. They can also search for child care on www.childcareva.com, or contact Child Care Aware of Virginia at <http://www.vachildcare.com> or by telephone at 866-481-1913.

8. Should I record an absence if I am turned away because I am considered non-essential or because the program has reached maximum capacity under the new guidelines (limit group size to 10)?

Yes. If the provider remains open, the Subsidy Program will pay for an absent day if the child was authorized and unable to attend for any reason.

If you are considered essential personnel and are turned away due to the program reaching capacity, you may need to find alternate care. In this circumstance, contact your local department when a new program is identified.

*For purposes of this guidance document, essential personnel are the first-responders, health care workers, and others who help maintain the health, safety, and welfare of the Commonwealth's residents. Examples of essential personnel include:

- Providers of healthcare including, but not limited to, workers at clinics, hospitals, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), nursing homes, long-term care and post-acute care facilities, respite houses, designated agencies and emergency medical services;
- Essential government employees, including public health employees and employees who oversee or support all the other functions included in this list;
- Criminal justice personnel including those in law enforcement, courts, and correctional services;
- Police, firefighters, and military;
- Employees who operate shelters or other essential services for adults, children and families;
- Employees who ensure continuity of basic services such as electricity/gas, water, internet, plumbing, sanitation and garbage removal;
- Employees who ensure essential transportation, including public transportation, trucking and health care-related transportation;
- Employees who ensure essential food, pharmaceutical and supplies access (e.g., grocery, food bank, feeding programs, drug store, hardware store); and
- Staff and providers of child care and education services (including custodial and kitchen staff and other support staff) for children of other essential personnel.

Note that these examples are not exhaustive and the definition of essential personnel may evolve as needed to respond to the crisis.

9. How do I record attendance if I am unable to enter the child care facility to use my VA-ECC card?

Discuss this issue with your child care provider to decide what works best for both of you. There is a 'Store and Forward' feature on the Point of Service device. This feature offers portability of the device for use outside of the facility. The vendor may choose to use this option to record attendance or submit manual attendance.

10. Where can I find instructions for recording absent days?

The *Parent Guide for Recording an Absence from Any Phone* is available at childcareva.com on the [COVID-19 response page](#). You may also contact your local department of social services for assistance with recording absences.

11. Will I receive priority on the Waiting List if I am considered essential personnel?

Only if the family meets one of the currently prioritized groups.

Child Care Subsidy Program FAQs - Providers:

12. What if a child in the Child Care Subsidy Program is quarantined or otherwise unable to attend?

Can I be paid for that absence?

The Child Care Subsidy Program has increased the total number of paid absences to 76, which can be used within the fiscal year. This should allow families the flexibility to use absences when children are not able to attend regularly scheduled days of care. The new absence limit should cover children who may already have used all of the previously allotted 36 absences. The ability to be paid for absences is available to both Level 1 (unlicensed) vendors and Level 2 (licensed and license-equivalent) vendors.

However, parents must enter absences for the provider to be paid for the absent day. Parents may use any phone (not just the phone onsite at the provider's business site) to utilize the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) option to record the absent day. Parents can dial 877-918-2322 to access the IVR option to enter an absence.

13. Will my center receive absence payments if we are temporarily closed?

No, Child Care Subsidy payments will not be made for days that the vendor was closed.

14. What about unexplained absences?

In a public health crisis, it is more important than ever for parents to be informing providers each day if their children are attending. Providers should work with parents to ensure timely communication of any absences so children can be accounted for and documented correctly. Please ensure that parents understand the importance of communicating about attendance during this time and are clear on their obligation to report all absences.

15. Can I receive reimbursement for subsidized children if I temporarily close my program?

Virginia is not reimbursing programs for subsidized children if the program is closed. Child Care Subsidy payments will not be made for days when the vendor is closed and unavailable to parents, with the exception of the holidays listed in paragraph 8.6 of the Child Care Subsidy Vendor Agreement.

Providers may be faced with challenging decisions regarding COVID-19 related closures, and families may also be impacted by changes to their work schedules, income, and child care closures. Decisions about implementing closures should be made locally in collaboration with local health officials who can best advise regarding local conditions.

16. How should manual attendance be submitted during the COVID-19 episode?

Manual attendance forms will be accepted by email as an Adobe PDF attachment and sent to vendor.services@dss.virginia.gov. Email is the preferred method of receipt. Manual attendance forms will also be accepted via United States Postal Service mail if you are unable to email the

manual attendance. For questions regarding manual attendance, please email Vendor.Services@dss.virginia.gov.

17. When will additional absent days be available to Level 1 and Level 2 vendors?

The Subsidy program has made additional absent days available as of March 27, 2020. Absence units have been increased in the system to 76 units for Level 1 and Level 2 child care vendors. Parents should record their absences by calling in absences to 877-918-2322. This number is located on the back of their card. If it is past the 8-day back swipe period, manual attendance can be submitted using the reason code: COVID-19. If a parent is unable to sign the form include: "parent not available" on the signature line.

18. How do parents record attendance if they are not permitted to enter the child care facility to use their VA-ECC card?

The Point of Service device has a 'Store and Forward' feature, which offers portability of the device for use outside of the facility. The vendor may choose to use this option to record attendance or submit manual attendance.

19. Will new emergency child care or child watch programs at public school facilities be eligible to participate in the Subsidy program?

These programs will not be eligible to participate in the Subsidy program.

For the latest news and updates related to the Child Care Subsidy Program, please visit www.childcareva.com. If you have any additional questions or concerns, please contact your local department of social services.